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**Title:** Language Ideologies and Learning Historical Minority Languages: A comparative study of voluntary learners of Swedish in Finland and Hungarian in Romania

**Year:** 2015

**Version:**

**Please cite the original version:**

Kiss, A. (2015). Language Ideologies and Learning Historical Minority Languages: A comparative study of voluntary learners of Swedish in Finland and Hungarian in Romania. *Apples : Journal of Applied Language Studies*, 9(1), 87-109.  
<https://doi.org/10.17011/apples/2015090105>

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# Language Ideologies and Learning Historical Minority Languages: A comparative study of voluntary learners of Swedish in Finland and Hungarian in Romania

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*Language ideologies surrounding the learning of historical minority languages deserve more/closer attention because due to the strong nation state ideology, the relation between majority and minority languages has long been problematic, and native speakers of majority languages do not typically learn the languages of the minorities voluntarily. This article discusses the language ideologies of voluntary learners of Swedish and Hungarian in two contexts where these languages are historical minority languages. Data was collected at evening courses in Oradea, Romania and Jyväskylä, Finland on which a qualitative analysis was conducted. In the analysis, an ethnographic and discourse analysis perspective was adopted, and language ideologies were analyzed in their interactional form, acknowledging the position of the researcher in the co-construction of language ideologies in the interviews. The results show that the two contexts are very different, although there are also similarities in the language ideologies of the learners which seem to be significantly influenced by the prevailing historical discourses in place about the use and role of these languages. In the light of resilient historical metanarratives, I suggest that the challenges related to the learning of historical minority languages lie in the historical construction of modern ethnolinguistic nation-states and the present trajectories of such projects. At the same time, the learning of historical languages in contemporary globalized socio-cultural contexts can build on new post-national ideologies, such as the concept of learning historical languages as commodities.*

*Keywords:* language learning, language ideologies, discourse analysis

## 1 Introduction

The language ideologies constructed by the learners are considered central to understanding issues involved in the learning and teaching of additional languages in general (see Wortham 2005, 2008; Spolsky 2010), even in the case of elementary school children (Martínez-Roldán & Malavé 2004). This applies in particular to the context of adults learning the language of a historical minority voluntarily (see Azkue & Perales 2005; Cenoz & Perales 2010; McEwan-Fujita 2010; Zenker 2014).

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ISSN: 1457-9863

Publisher: Centre for Applied Language Studies, University of Jyväskylä

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In this article, I report the findings of an ethnographic research that I conducted about adult voluntary learners' language ideologies. The focus is on majority language speakers who learn historical minority languages, and more precisely on speakers of Finnish learning Swedish, and speakers of Romanian learning Hungarian in two sites: Oradea, Romania and Jyväskylä, Finland. I focus on two minority language contexts in the European Union, where the official policies and nation state ideologies show significant differences. I approach the issue from the vantage point of language ideologies, and I conduct a discourse analysis (see section 5 for details on methodology) on empirical data collected through interviews.

Spolsky (2010) pointed out that the learning of minority languages first became popular during the 'ethnic revival' that flourished in Western Europe and North America in the 1960s. In practice, this phenomenon is related to the concept of language heritage, which means that the learners viewed/looked at the language that they were learning as their own, and this ownership and identification with the language can be seen as part of reclaiming their ethnic identity (e.g. Zenker 2014). However, recent developments in the theory and practice of language teaching have revealed that the contexts of learning historical languages are, in fact, manifold (e.g. Lynch 2003; Duff 2009). For instance, *reviving* languages, such as Gaelic or Welsh, are often learned by language enthusiasts (Zenker 2014: 64), who do not have anybody who speaks the language in question in their family (cf. McEwan-Fujita 2010).

Most studies on linguistic minorities and language learning have been conducted in the traditional nationalistic framework. For example, heritage language learning studies usually focus on language as inheritance and the reproduction of native speakers, disregarding out-group learners (cf. Spolsky 2010; Guardado 2014; for exceptions see Pujolar 2007; Pujolar & Gonzales 2013; Oh & Nash 2014). My approach draws on current sociolinguistic theory and is not committed to the traditional perspectives. Similar emerging research on Western European settings focuses on *new speakers* in the broadest sense, referring to multilingual minority and immigrant language learners (e.g. Pujolar 2007). Parallel to such ventures (Pujolar & Gonzales 2013), my study concerns voluntary adult learners, which is a relatively under-researched area in general (but see Oh & Nash 2014). Studies on "new" Catalan-speakers have demonstrated that linguistic practices and language ideologies may change throughout life (Woolard 2013; for a similar case in South Tyrol, see Cavagnoli & Nardin 1999).

In the contexts under examination, that is members of the titular group learning a minority language, May (2012) has directed the attention to the relations between the legal-political and the cultural-historical dimensions of nationhood. He argues that, in order to become a nation state in modern Western European terms, the hegemony of the majority culture and language needs to be secured. The projection of majority nationalism upon minorities is thus considered to be the naturalization of the nation state model with an integrative core language and core-culture. Greater representations of the minority language and culture, such as teaching a minority language to the titular group, "are viewed as parochial and destabilizing" (May 2012: 84), or in terms of historical development "essentially anti-modern" (May 2012: 27). Like most European countries, in Romania the ideology of the unity of nation, state and one language is normative and enshrined in the constitution, while in the case of Finland, Swedish retained its functions as a co-official language along

with Finnish. As Kamusella (2009: 57) notes “this disqualifies Finland from the exclusive club of ‘true’ ethnolinguistic nation-states”. I have chosen to compare these two contexts of language learning in order to explore whether the above approach has consequences for language ideologies with respect to the voluntary learning of the historical minority language.

In the light of its historical dominance in relation to other East-Central European languages, the former imperial contexts of German bear a gross resemblance to the position of Hungarian in the multiethnic Hungarian Kingdom before 1920 (see Duszak 2006; Jaworska 2009; Nekvapil & Sherman 2009; Berecz 2013). German also serves as a basis of comparison in respect to the language policy developments of a privileged historical minority language in the present day because we can draw a parallel between Swedish in Finland and German in South Tyrol, Italy, where it has a similar position on a regional level (see Cavagnoli & Nardin 1999; Wolff 2000).

In this article, I approach the study of the voluntary learning of minority languages by the majority by exploring the language ideologies of the subjects through interviews. Gal (2006a) conceptualizes the field of language ideologies as a form of discourse analysis. Language ideologies have been defined as “cultural, metapragmatic assumptions about the relationship between words, speakers, and worlds” (Gal 2006a: 388). In interviews, implicit and explicit statements as well as conceptions about languages occur (Laihonen 2008, 2009). My investigation mostly focuses on the transparent, explicit talk about languages, their value, and how and why they are learned.

The implications for the learners can be far reaching since: “Ideologies, whether invited or imposed, normally come and go with a language” (Duszak 2006: 95). Following Gal (2006b: 15), in order to unfold language ideologies we need to analyze the configuration of these sometimes unconscious cultural assumptions and notions which serve as a frame for linguistic practices as well (cf. Blommaert 2006). Language ideologies also offer insights into “the microculture of communicative action to political economic considerations of power and social inequality, confronting macrosocial constraints on language behavior” (Woolard & Schieffelin 1994: 72). The language ideologies around the learning of historical minority languages deserve attention, especially since, in most cases, the relation between majority and minority languages has been asymmetric, as May stresses (2012), e.g. for many Western intellectuals majority languages represent modernity and progress whereas minority languages are tokens of cultural separatism and disintegration. From this perspective, it is no wonder that it is not a widespread practice that majority language speakers would embark on learning the languages of the minorities, if such an opportunity is offered at all (for a similar argument, see Nekvapil & Sherman 2009).

In the analysis of research interviews, I subscribe to the tradition that illustrates how “talk about language is constructed to meet the expectations of the question, the general orientation of the interview and the amount of shared knowledge” (Laihonen 2008: 678). In the article I also point out how the “metalanguage is connected to the social situation” (Laihonen 2008: 671), as well as how “world views or social positions” are co-constructed together during interview interaction (Laihonen 2008: 671; see also De Fina 2009; Mori, 2012). That is, when a story is told, it is told for this interviewer (me) in the interactional context of the interview; for instance, because the interviewer

asked a question and perhaps did not understand the answer, the interviewee ended up clarifying his answer with a narrative.

My study is guided by the following questions: what are the language ideologies as displayed and co-constructed in interviews with the author, of the learners towards learning a historical minority language in voluntary courses? What underlying ideological considerations hinder or facilitate learning in both Romanian and Finnish contexts?

## 2 Background: basis of comparison

Despite the relatively high proportion of the historical minorities of Finland and Romania (ca. 6 per cent in both countries, Official Statistics Finland 2010; Institutul Național de Statistică 2011), the general perception in both contexts is that only few people voluntarily study Swedish in Finland and Hungarian in Romania. In the following, I present the contexts of two research sites, Jyväskylä and Oradea, placing them in the larger frameworks of the status of Hungarian in Romania and Swedish in Finland. In Finland, the status of Swedish is much different compared to the status of Hungarian in Romania. Romania defines itself as a nation state with Romanian as its sole national language (The Constitution of Romania 2003) while Finland is officially bilingual and Swedish and Finnish have equal status (The Constitution of Finland 2000).

In the present territory of Finland, Swedish dates back to the first written sources of the 12th century. The area formed a part of the Swedish Empire before it became an autonomous Grand Duchy under Russia in 1809. Finland declared independence in 1917. Swedish and Finnish have been used and spoken by intellectuals and state officials for long, and it has not caused a problem for the elite to learn Finnish and later Swedish. After the general educational reform of 1968 (Palviainen 2010a), learning Swedish became compulsory for the masses.

In Finland, education is conducted in Finnish and Swedish on an equal basis (Palviainen 2010a). Furthermore, *the other national language* is a compulsory subject in both Finnish and Swedish medium schools. Compulsory Swedish classes have been the subject of populist campaigns and have lately received some publicity in the Finnish media. The derogatory Finnish word *pakkoruotsi*, 'forced Swedish' (Palviainen 2013a: 4), designates Swedish as a compulsory subject in school. The idea of making Finland a monolingual nation state surfaces in populist political discourses, but so far it has been rejected by the majority of the educated Finnish speaking population. However, in a longitudinal survey carried out with the participation of altogether 1591 Finnish speaking students in 2006/2007 and 2010 (Palviainen & Jauhojärvi-Koskela 2009; Palviainen 2010b), a significant decrease was observed in the numbers of those who expressed willingness to study Swedish if it were not compulsory in secondary education.

In the context of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, the learning of each other's languages was a general practice that disappeared in the 20th century (Gal 2011: 32). In Transylvania, Romanian and Hungarian played out the 'dominated dominant' dichotomy as German and Czech did in the Czech lands (see Nekvapil 2000). In Transylvania, the end of the 19th century was characterized by the policy of 'Magyarization', which was carried out mainly through compulsory Hungarian education in state schools. Romanian speakers generally resisted this, and in Romanian villages, few used Hungarian outside of school

(see Berecz 2013). In 1920, Transylvania was ceded to Romania. Since then, the Hungarian language has been perceived in terms of its former dominance, to be counterbalanced in a post-colonial venture to integrate the region into the emerging Romanian Nation State. From this background, the idea of learning the culture and language of the historical minority seems perhaps even bizarre for the members of the titular culture. The teaching of Hungarian for Romanian speakers is provided in the framework of supplementary classes in school education, provided demand for it exists. For example, in Oradea, there was only one occasion when a Hungarian optional language course was organized. Therefore, we can state that there is largely no formal Hungarian language teaching in the Romanian schools, such as there is Swedish in the Finnish educational system.

### 3 Sites of research

I conducted research in Jyväskylä and Oradea. Jyväskylä is an officially monolingual Finnish municipality in Central Finland. Founded in 1837, the city was chosen to host an education center for the first Finnish medium high-school and teacher education, partly due to the fact that the new capital Helsinki (Helsingfors) was predominantly Swedish speaking in the 1860s. The 19th-century hamlet has grown into a major university city. Out of the 131,000 inhabitants, 312 are registered as Swedish speakers. In Finland everyone is officially registered at birth as a speaker of either Finnish/Swedish or a speaker of another language (Statistics Finland 2015). The existence of Swedish daycare and schooling indicate that there is Swedish bilingualism even in this overwhelmingly Finnish speaking city (see Palviainen 2013b).

My second site, the city of Oradea (Hungarian: Nagyvárad, German: Grosswardein), is situated in Western Romania, 10 kilometers from the border of Hungary. According to the 2011 census, out of the total 184,861 inhabitants, the percentage of those who claimed Hungarian as a mother tongue was 23%. Before 1920 the city belonged to the Kingdom of Hungary. Generally depicted as a major center of Hungarian culture and literary life, Oradea is also significant to Romanian culture since it was an important site in the region for Romanian national awakening. The Hungarian-speaking Jewish population played an important role in the development and cultural life of the city (e.g. Mózes 1997). Nagyvárad was considered to be a cosmopolitan city despite the fact that Hungarian had the dominant position in administration and education, and Hungarian served as a *lingua franca* for the various ethnicities, even as late as the 1960s. In comparison to Jyväskylä, Romanian learners in Oradea frequently hear the historical minority language in everyday life.

Next, I will take a brief look at the institutions where the voluntary learning of historical languages was investigated. In Finland evening classes have a long tradition. At Jyväskylä the classes were held at the local Community College (*Kansalaisopisto*), a nationwide network dedicated to adult education. Finnish interviewees often recall that they attend these classes because a good framework exists for it. After the 1968 educational reform in Finland, everybody has learnt Swedish on a compulsory basis in secondary education. Thus, there are no beginner courses offered at *Kansalaisopisto*, but only refresher courses, and the lowest level is intermediate. The study brochure of the institution advertises the courses as follows: "Did you forget the Swedish that you studied

in school times? We will repeat the basic grammar structures and practice” (Jyväskylän Kansalaisopisto 2013: 36). This seems to resonate for example with the needs of participants of the third age<sup>1</sup> in my data: “when I retired I think I must have some hobby (.) and then I thought I have three nights per week to study here something (.) so I began to learn Swedish because it isn’t so difficult now. (...) I want to repeat what I learned before” (woman in her 60s). From another perspective, according to a teacher in Jyväskylä, it is more characteristic that participants attend the courses because they need Swedish for work purposes, or they moved to Jyväskylä from a Swedish speaking area in Finland and they want to maintain their language skills. The teacher recalled that among the learners there were employees in customer service, physicians, and nurses.

In Romania there is no similar nationwide adult training network. Interviewees in Oradea were taking part in a course organized and taught by me under the auspices of the Debrecen Summer School in the building of a Hungarian medium high-school (see Kiss 2012). In Oradea, there was also interest on the part of the third age generation, but their numbers are not as significant as in Finland. The most numerous group in Romania were teachers who considered that Hungarian would be useful in their profession, which involves interacting with language minority students.

In Jyväskylä there were also younger course participants as well as university students. For example, Jussi (all names are pseudonyms, Jussi was in his 20s) and Maiju (in her early 30s) were taking part in the course because they felt that they needed a basic course in order to be able to obtain the Degree Certificate of Studies in Swedish for civil servants (in Finnish often referred to as *virkamiesruotsi*) (see Palviainen 2010a). In Oradea, similar language courses were organized by the Municipality wherein members of the community police attended the classes on a voluntary basis, but no exams for civil servants in Hungarian exist in Romania.

#### 4 Data

The present article is based mainly on the findings of semi-structured interviews that were conducted by me in English in Jyväskylä, and in Romanian in Oradea. In the case of Oradea, being present as a teacher (for details see Kiss 2013), I documented three courses from 2010 to 2011. In Jyväskylä, I visited the *Kansalaisopisto* 10 times in 2013.

Research diaries and institutional course brochures serve as sources of background information. The interviews in Romania were carried out after a period of around half a year when the participants were attending a second course. There were individual interviews and interviews conducted with two participants together.

In Oradea my role in the field was foremost that of a teacher of Hungarian for the interviewees, a person who organized and taught Hungarian evening courses at the premises of a Hungarian high school, and a member of the ethnic Hungarian minority. As someone who lived most of his life in the city, I was looked upon as a person who did not need an introduction to the local situation. That is, I was treated as a person who possesses a great deal of emic and local knowledge. I had not known the course participants prior to the course, but due to our classes I had developed a closer personal relationship more with the Romanian interviewees than with the Finnish participants, whom I met for the

first time when I solicited their interviews as a foreign researcher. Therefore, they looked upon me as an outsider not likely to be familiar with the ethnographic and political details of learning Swedish in Finland.

I scheduled the interviews before or after their weekly Swedish classes at the Community College (*kansalaisopisto*). We usually sat down in the cafeteria of the City Library in Jyväskylä, or in the classroom where we would have our class in Oradea. I conducted interviews with 25 informants (12 in Oradea and 13 in Jyväskylä), and the interviews usually lasted from 30 to 90 minutes, resulting in a total of ca. 6 hours of audio material in both the Jyväskylä and Oradea cases. The interviewees were mostly college graduates, employed in education, or in the service industries. In Jyväskylä there were more third-age informants than in Oradea. I started the interviews by asking why they learnt the language, as well as how other people reacted to their decision to participate in a course on their respective minority language. I enquired about their trajectories as learners of Hungarian or Swedish and the areas of use of these languages as well as relations to members of the linguistic minority. Beyond the fact that the author conducted all of the interviews, the uniformity of approach and areas of interest resulted in comparable data sets.

## 5 Research methods

I use Discourse Analysis as complementary with ethnography. In approaching the language ideologies of majority language learners of historical minority languages, I adopt Geertz's (1973/2000) approach to ethnography, who considered it a viewpoint rather than a method. He suggested "thick description" in the study of the complexities and particularities of whichever social scenes are under scrutiny. The other two constitutive components of his approach were an emic, or insider perspective mainly in the Romanian context, and partly in the Finnish context, as well as the researcher's awareness that the researcher is a constitutive part of the research scene. The ethnographic approach stresses the open-ended nature of research and "getting quality from the actor's point of view" (Atkinson 2005: 50). This is especially relevant in the case of Language ideologies.

In the analysis of the interview data I consider applied Conversation Analysis (CA) as a suitable method for its valuable practices and insights into analyzing spoken interaction. In comparison to the generally more static ethnographic accounts "CA portrays social behavior as dynamic, emergent and situated vis-à-vis the interactional contingencies of the moment" (Atkinson, Hanako & Talmy 2011: 88). I was interested in the ideas interviewees have about the historical minority languages they are learning, and what kind of explicit evaluations they make about the learning of said languages. I always include the questions and interviewer reactions to answers in the examination of interviewees' statements since I consider them relevant to the form and occurrence of metalinguistic comments. Another interviewer, posing other questions and reacting differently to the answers, would have received different accounts on learning a historical language. Interactional data is also used in Jaffe (1999) and Heller (2011) largely from the discourse analytic perspective of analyzing the content of turns by different actors, however, Laihonen (2008; see also ten Have 2004) brings together insights from Language Ideologies and Conversation Analysis in order to show how the contents and details of shifts in interaction are actually co-



constructed and how language ideas are intertwined with the interactional structure in interviews.

I analyze semi-structured interviews (see ten Have 2004 for different interview types). I approach the Second Language Acquisition of historical minority languages from the perspective of anthropological sociolinguistics applying ethnographical data collection and analysis methods as outlined by Heller (2008) and Blommaert and Dong (2010). Therefore, I take the interpretivist stance of linguistic ethnography, describe practices and address questions to shed light on language ideologies. In the analysis of the interviews I also look at “patterns of discourse as they emerge in interaction”, and as “primary acts of meaning-making” (Heller 2001: 251). I use an integrative approach (Heller 2008) and look at larger social and historical processes and structures beyond the interaction, too.

## 6 Language ideologies: insights from the interviews

### 6.1 Why people learn a historical minority language?

I started each interview by asking about the reasons for the interviewees’ learning Hungarian or Swedish in order to map the most important factors that prompted interviewees to enroll in the voluntary learning of these two languages. One of the Finnish research participants in Jyväskylä, Leila, is a pensioner in her 60s, and beside from helping out her family dedicates two evenings to herself:

#### Excerpt 1\*

- 1 AK: what makes you study Swedish in your free time?
- 2 Leila: I thought that I would love to have a language course as a
- 3 hobby and I liked Swedish (.) it is easy (.) but I never had the chance
- 4 to speak it in natural circumstances (.) I went to the discussion course
- 5 for the second time (.) first I was surprised that there are so many
- 6 people (.) first, I thought that it would not be a popular choice (.)
- 7 in general people were not that interested in Swedish (.)
- 8 you probably heard already that it is not a popular topic in school (.) or
- 9 people don’t need it in work life being in Central Finland (.)
- 10 but anyway (.) the course it was almost full (.) it was 20 people.

\* (.) denotes micro pauses less than 0.2 seconds. In the transcription of the interviews a simplified version of transcription conventions of Conversation Analysis is used. The list of transcription symbols can be found at the end of article.

The interviewer in this question positions adult language learning as a free-time activity. Further, the question explicitly concerns *learning Swedish in one’s free time*. Learning Swedish is an ideologically loaded question in Finland as the informant also mentions later (in line 8). In comparison, an alternative format would have been a general question (e.g. ‘what makes you study languages in your free time?’) or an ideologically more *neutral* ‘hobby language’ in this context, such as Italian or Spanish. Leila’s answer implicates the ideological encumbrance of learning Swedish as a free time activity. First, Leila accepts the stance about learning languages as a hobby, which she explicitly states in her

answer (“I would love to have a language course as a hobby”), then, in her next remark, she evokes ideological images of learning Swedish as a subject at school. That is, the informant presents an image of herself as a Swedish learner who liked the language in school, and finds it easy despite the fact that she did not have a chance to use it in “natural circumstances”. This reflects the conception that Swedish is not used in this part of Finland. It was voiced in other interviews as well that Swedish is not needed in the region of Central Finland because it is a Finnish-speaking region (see also Palviainen 2012: 20). However, other interviewees claim seeing both private sector and government job advertisements where Swedish skills were a requirement: “Swedish is still strong (.) or in demand in customer service (.) Swedish, it is required on a level to get by” (Tuija). In sum, there are contradictory evaluations, sometimes even within the same interview, as regards to the usefulness of Swedish in Central Finland.

Leila is “surprised” (line 5) that there were many people attending the course, and recalls that her presumption was that “in general people were not interested in Swedish”. The next sentence introduced by “you probably heard” shows that the remark is clearly addressed to the interviewer, who is thus depicted as an outsider who might not have basic knowledge of the discourses on learning Swedish in Finland. In this way the interviewer’s position as a foreigner was reflected in other interviews with Finns as well, but not in the interviews with Romanians, where he had the position of a local, an issue to which I return later.

Leila voices the stereotype “not a popular subject in schools” (line 8), introducing the interviewer to the widely circulated language ideologies in Finland. She explains this with the remark that “people don’t need it in work life being in Central Finland” making the instrumental connection between learning a language and acquiring a job. She also points out the different approaches to language learning. That is, the conversation course is different from the school education that she had experience with.

Romanian informants from Oradea reflected upon the fact that they learned the language in informal settings through interacting with Hungarians. For reasons of space I present only the English translations of the interviews carried out in Romanian:

### Excerpt 2

- 1 AK: how typical do you think your experience is? that er (.) you learned
- 2 Hungarian by (.) being in touch with the Hungarians from here?
- 3 Liliana: so (.) that most of the Romanians learn the language due to the
- 4 contacts that they have?
- 5 AK: yes
- 6 Liliana: I think that quite many (.) I don’t know but I have always been in
- 7 touch with (--) if it was neighbours (.) or family friends (.) or
- 8 acquaintances in general (.) and for me (.) at least it was like a game that I
- 9 can say something (.) or I could understand (.) to be able to understand (.)
- 10 to be able to say a few sentences in the language of the other one and he
- 11 she could understand (.) you I think it has to do with respect that you want
- 12 to show towards the other one (.) to show him=her that you know the
- 13 language he uses.

The interviewer introduces the idea that Romanians from Oradea acquire some Hungarian through interaction with Hungarian speakers. Aligning to this

conception, the informant (Liliana, a Romanian in her late 30s) presents her personal experience, which sees language as a tool for communication among co-inhabitants (neighbors, friends). As this excerpt shows, proficiency in the language may not be very high, or go beyond a few sentences, but it serves the purposes of indexing respect.

Liliana also introduces the idea that language learning was a game for her “and for me (.) at least it was like a game that I can say something (.) or I could understand” (line 8, 9). Due to the lack of formal language teaching, the learners often express that they were not acquainted with Hungarian grammar, and their knowledge is based on what they picked up from natural interaction with Hungarians, or from Hungarian television.

Later in the interview she also refers to occasional job advertisements in the local newspapers that list Hungarian as an additional advantage. In other interviews, Romanian learners also mention that it could be useful to speak Hungarian in customer service. Here the instrumentality of Hungarian appears as a potentially useful tool for future possibilities and it is opposed to the traditional ideologies of ethno-linguistic group membership, or political division.

From a comparative perspective, we can sum up that Finns in Jyväskylä acquire the basics of Swedish in the framework of formal school education whereas Romanians in Oradea acquire it from their environment. Finns can build on their school language courses at a later stage of their life when they decide to voluntarily study the language. Refreshing knowledge resulting from the previous formal training and knowledge is given as the reason for continuing their voluntary Swedish learning. Many Romanian learners could fall in the heritage learner category, and they too have surpassed the basic level of proficiency in Hungarian – mostly through picking up different elements of the language from the environment (see Kiss in press for details). In this respect they are different to most Finnish speakers. In sum, learners in both interview groups expressed that they feel they have the survival skills and feel able to perform simple touristic or border crossing tasks in their respective target languages.

## 6.2 *Ideologies of transnational communication*

Olli is a Finnish speaking man in his 60s who started studying Swedish both for personal and professional reasons. A significant part of the next interview is concerned with the areas of use of the languages as well as transnational communication. In the following excerpt the informant describes in detail his ambivalence regarding language choice at academic conferences:

### **Excerpt 3**

- 1 AK: how often does it happen that Swedish is a common language?
- 2 Olli: when Scandinavians meet at conferences we have a feeling that we
- 3 belong to the same group of people: Finns, Norwegians, and so on, and
- 4 quite often when nations are grouped together (0.2) it is not nice when I
- 5 am not able to speak Swedish, because then all other people will speak
- 6 Swedish (0.2) Norwegians, Danes, Swedish people, and so this happens
- 7 quite often to me that I participate in a conference and we should have a
- 8 geographical meeting.
- 9 AK: mhm
- 10 Olli: and then Swedish, Norwegians and Finns we are put together. and

- 11 then it is a real, real problem, because Swedish people they know that we  
 12 do not want to speak Swedish  
 13 AK: mhm  
 14 Olli: and there is always discussion that er we have Finns there should we  
 15 speak Swedish or something else, and very often the solution is that all  
 16 Scandinavians just start to speak English.  
 17 Interviewer: mhm  
 18 Olli: and it would be very nice if we could say that just speak Swedish  
 19 AK: mhm  
 20 Olli: they know that they don't like or cannot speak very well Swedish  
 21 and then it is not nice for Scandinavian people that they cannot use their  
 22 language but this is quite common this happens almost every year  
 23 somewhere to me.

Some interviewees state that they feel too insecure about their Swedish skills to use it in a business context, and therefore, English is used. Based on another part of the interview where Olli mentioned Swedish as his *lingua franca*, the interviewer in line 1 requests clarification about the idea that Swedish could act as a *lingua franca*. I enquire into the frequency of such cases, and Olli answers with examples of situations where such a thing happens, and what problems it involves. Olli constructs an ideology that Finns are either “not able”, or “do not want to” speak Swedish in international contexts, and this “is not nice for Scandinavian people that they can not use their language” (line 4,5). In this ideology, Swedish is the transnational language of Scandinavia, or the regional language of access for cooperation. Olli builds his answer on the ideology that there is solidarity between the Scandinavian people and that Scandinavian languages are mutually comprehensible, therefore the Finns should use Swedish in those situations. However, due to the lack of skills in Swedish, some Finns are of the opinion that using Swedish as a Scandinavian *lingua franca* is best, but the use of Swedish is problematic and fraught with many challenges.

In the Finnish data we encounter many formulations about the usefulness of Swedish as the common language of Scandinavia. Swedish appears as a Scandinavian *lingua franca* in the eyes of interviewees. This seems to be in line with a common ideology in favor of Swedish in school education. In current debates one of the arguments is that Swedish skills enhance Nordic cooperation and may contribute to a sense of unity with other Nordic nations (cf. Palviainen 2011: 18). The common counter-argument is that English might be the *de facto lingua franca* of Scandinavia. In excerpt 3, and in other interviews, it was voiced, however, that knowledge of Swedish could be expected from Finnish speakers because of their school education.

In Oradea interviewees also reflect upon the proximity of the border and language contacts.

#### Excerpt 4

- 1 AK: do you think that learning Hungarian will give you a chance to  
 2 meet more Hungarian speakers  
 3 Maria: [...] not necessary for this [...] to be able to speak a language (.)  
 4 it opens up the path to another culture, another civilization (.)  
 5 it is very important (.) for me by any means  
 6 it is important to be able to understand some neighbors (.) because I do not  
 7 know if you realize that Romanians know very little about Hungary and

- 8 Hungarians, not counting their daily experiences (.) but they do not know  
 9 anything about civilisation, history (.) I do not know whether this is a  
 10 mutual problem (.) probably not because (0.3) so  
 11 AK: what is the reason for that?  
 12 Maria: there are prejudices here (.) they do not have the inclination (.) and  
 13 for me it is most curious for one to learn German first, because Hungarian  
 14 is the first language that you bump into in our region.

This sequence starts with the interviewer's question as to whether the interviewees learn Hungarian in order to meet more Hungarian speakers. First, the informant develops a more general approach by saying that the more languages one knows the better it is: Maria (Romanian woman in her 50s) argues that she is learning Hungarian for more general reasons than just "meeting Hungarians", but in fact "to be able a language (.) it opens up the paths to another culture, another civilization"(lines 3, 4). That is, she builds a discourse that resonates with the late-modern and neo-liberal entrepreneurial project of self-improvement (see Giddens 1999).

The informant says that she became interested in the language because she has Hungarian neighbors (line 6). The word has twofold significance because on the one hand it refers to her next-door neighbors, and on the other hand to the neighboring country, for the close proximity of the border and cross-border commerce is significant in the case of Oradea. Many Romanian speakers may regularly go shopping in Hungary, and some would even purchase a house, or weekend house, with possessing just basic knowledge of Hungarian. Some interviewees say that they do not intend to learn more than necessary to conduct these activities. Maria points out that there is a discrepancy between these day-to-day language contacts and a deeper knowledge of civilization and history. She says that "Romanians know very little about Hungarians" (line 7, 8). She explains this with the existence of prejudice and a lack of disposition (line 12) to language learning. By recalling prejudice as a politicized stance Maria references here the larger socio-cultural framework, describable as traditional ethno-nationalist discourse, which typically works against the learning of historical minority languages.

Just like in the case of Finland and Sweden, tourism and visits to each respective country are of the highest number between the citizens of Romania and Hungary. In the Romanian data we also find examples of trans-border communication:

#### Excerpt 5

- 1 AK: and how do you evaluate, are Romanians from Oradea interested  
 2 in Hungarian language and culture (0.2) do they get necessary information to  
 3 be interested (0.2) to bring it to their (0.2)  
 4 Corina: [here the worlds  
 5 AK: [attention?  
 6 Corina: [are really split (0.2) linked to the ↑real identity er of each one  
 7 (0.2) they have a lot of contact (.) and they are appreciative (.) of Hungarian  
 8 ↑civilisation (.), and in relation to what happens there

The interviewer asks the interviewees to speak about whether they think Romanians from Oradea are interested in Hungarian language and culture. Considering that the interviewer is a Hungarian from Oradea the interview can

be looked upon as a kind of intercultural encounter with Romanians who gained intercultural experience by being bilinguals, and by taking part in Hungarian language courses.

The informant, Corina (a Romanian woman in her 50s), resists the interviewer's generalizing category of "Romanians from Oradea". She begins speaking of other Romanians by consequently using the third person plural pronoun "they", instead of using the pronoun we, which would signal in-group affiliation: e.g. "they have a lot of contact (.) and they appreciative" (line 7). In this way she adopts the discursive role of an intermediary and positions herself as knowledgeable about both categories. She rejects the negative stereotypes and says that there is more communication and contact between the speakers of these two languages than may be evident from a superficial glance.

### 6.3 Negative stereotypes on learning a historical minority language

The next interview excerpt is typical of how many interviewees refer to widely circulated negative discourses about Swedish in Finland:

#### Excerpt 6

- 1 AK: and what was the first reaction of your acquaintances when
- 2 you told them that you learn Swedish in your free time?
- 3 Tuija: first reaction is @WHAT? WHY?@ (everybody laughs) @WHY@
- 4 would you do such a thing? it is because Swedish language is so hated
- 5 when we grow up in high school.
- 6 Mari: because you have to learn it
- 7 Tuija: you have to, so it becomes hated, and it is mandatory to hate it and
- 8 if you do not hate it you are discarded from the community so you have to
- 9 hate it (.) that kind of thing.
- 10 Tuija: it is a really ancient rivalry between Finnish and Swedish because
- 11 Sweden used to be our mother nation (---) for six hundred years (0.2) they
- 12 were the better people at the time (.) so all the nobles were Swedish
- 13 AK: does this still live on?
- 14 Tuija: yeah, yeah [...] it lives on. it is kind of (.) not a real hatred it is a fun hatred (0.2)
- 15 you know it's like ice hockey
- 16 Mari: ice hockey is a good example

Even though not elicited by the interviewer, almost all Finnish informants speak about their school experiences as Swedish learners. Tuija and Mari, participants who belong to the younger generation (in their late 20s), reflect on the idea of the "compulsoriness" of Swedish in school. Tuija distances herself from this negative view of Swedish by ironically quoting some stereotypical voices. She enlists the negative stereotypes against Swedish, which include that it is not popular, moreover that it is "hated" because it is compulsory. Quoting the voices of others, laughter, and the use of the words "mandatory to hate it" (line 7) signals that she uses irony and constructs a subversive critique of the populist ideology, indexed through her deliberately choosing to study Swedish. Tuija takes this further by explaining that the relationship to learning Swedish is greatly influenced by generational peer pressure, which creates a culture of resistance among teenagers against the "compulsory" learning of Swedish. By giving a direct quotation (note also the change in voice) Tuija attributes these stereotypes held against Swedish to other people. The interviewee says that

there is “ancient rivalry between Finnish and Swedish” (line 10), and the expression “they were the better people” (line 12) refers to a widespread historical stereotype in the Finnish data.

When asked to reflect upon culture, some informants claim they know Sweden and Swedish culture quite well. Some stereotypes, however, seem to linger when one of the informant expresses that: “people in Sweden are \*iloisempi\* happier (.) more money” (Maiju, a woman in her 60s). In a reaction to this remark the interviewer asks: “do you think that you have a different persona when you speak Swedish? / Maiju: yes I think so.” The interviewer introduces the ideology that language learning seems to go hand in hand with identity work, and the informant gives an affirmative answer. I interpret this co-constructed exchange, as an illustration how language “elicits subjective responses in speakers themselves: emotions, memories, fantasies, projections, and identifications” (Kramsch 2009: 2).

Similarly, in the Oradea data, Ileana (a Romanian woman in her 50s) speaks of how her acquaintances reacted to the news when they learned that she studied Hungarian at evening classes:

#### Excerpt 7

- 1 AK: what did your acquaintances say when you told them that you study
- 2 Hungarian?
- 3 Maria: they found it funny (0.2) first of all they found it \*cool\* but how to
- 4 say it they were surprised (.) something like that
- 5 AK: weren't they wondering why?
- 6 Maria: yes first they asked why? @do you want to move to Hungary?
- 7 @but NOO. I say no (.) why should I?
- 8 AK: this was the first reaction?
- 9 Maria: this was their first reaction. (0.2) what is the hidden motive?

Learning a historical minority language, for instance Hungarian in Romania, and Swedish in Finland, as a subject of study in self-financed evening classes is a marked choice. In a manner similar to the analysis of the interviewer's questions in excerpt one, we can establish that inquiring into the learning of a historical language awaits some sort of denial of the negative stereotypes that go along with such languages due to the dominant nation state ideology in Europe. Here the interviewer can be seen to be probing for these stereotypes. That is, the question already implicates that whoever learns Hungarian in Romania has to take into account the reaction of the environment. The informant's (Maria, a Romanian woman in her 30s) response confirms that she has perceived this stance. In her response Maria relates that surprise was the first reaction of her acquaintances, and uses the English word “cool” in order to say that they found attending evening classes a novel and interesting activity. This is interesting since *historical* minority languages are often conceptualized as a thing of the past, and thus rather more “passé” than “cool”. When asked to give details, she further clarifies that others in fact thought she might emigrate to Hungary. Ileana uses the same strategy of directly quoting the reaction of her acquaintances, and also her own answer. According to this stereotype in Oradea, language study must be instrumental and one is likely to study a language in order to move to the country where it is an official language. The general opinion is that one should learn a language of much wider circulation than Hungarian. A common trait in both the Western Romanian and Central Finland

contexts are that the learners mention that their acquaintances were surprised when they mentioned their choice of language. English, however, is generally accepted as a language to study in adult age both in Finland and Romania, and Finns often mention Russian and Spanish as languages of choice in competition with Swedish.

#### *6.4 Joint histories, common traits, and aspects that hinder language learning*

Informants, especially in the case of Romania, evoke the common historical past, which was often charged by episodes of conflict, and this may create resistance to learning these languages. As we could see previously, Finnish interviewees from the younger generation might express a critical opinion concerning the past.

In respect to the recollection of stereotypes and historical grievances, there are even more marked examples in the Romanian data set. The popular oral histories between Romania and Hungary seem to have retained memories more of the offences of the earlier historical – and often more recent – conflictual periods:

##### **Excerpt 8**

- 1 AK: Did you speak Hungarian in the family?
- 2 Marcel: my father spoke the language (.) but did not support me learning it because
- 3 he had unpleasant memories of the Hungarian occupation.

Marcel (Romanian man in his 60s) recalls stories of his father that evoked the Hungarian rule during the Second World War. In Hungarian nationalist discourses, Nagyvárad was “liberated” and “returned” to Hungary in 1940, whereas from the Romanian point of view, the city was “occupied” by the Hungarian army.

Next, I will present a longer interview excerpt in which two Romanian learners of Hungarian reflect upon Hungarian language and culture. Both interviewees are highly educated women in their early fifties and are interested in the arts and architecture:

##### **Excerpt 9**

- 1 AK: what motivates you to study Hungarian?  
lines 2-21 omitted [the interviewees, Ana and Corina, first develop their answers into a long reflection about Hungarian culture, especially in the context of arts, architecture and arts education]
- 22 Ana: er for me (0.2) the area of the city and surroundings (.) is a matter of
- 23 legitimacy (.) on a background where there are very many mixtures (.) mixed
- 24 families (.) friendships very (.) so it's a very well welded together area (.) existing
- 25 (.) for many (0.2) with pa ... with roots (0.2) with past
- 26 Corina: so that of this tolerance?
- 27 Ana: yes (.) so there is texture (.) inextricable (.) of families
- 28 Corina: so it is
- 29 Ana: [for generations there are mixed families (.) isn't it (.) so here you can
- 30 not meddle (.) you can meddle in the zone (.) where I felt tension (.) even in my
- 31 family (.) this rapport not ↑yet clarified (.) distorted and perverted between er
- 32 masters and servants (.) so there exists this Romanian complex of the servant. of



- 33 the serfs (.) while Hungarians are the noblemen (.) and er they've been masters all  
 34 the time but (.) masters good or bad (.) well, it doesn't matter (.) so this complex  
 35 of superiority and respectively of inferiority [...]  
 At this point, she continues the interview by blaming politicians of manipulation of  
 these feelings and by fueling these antagonisms. Here in the interview the informants  
 tell two narratives in order to illustrate these points and continue by saying the  
 following:
- Ana: so this er (0.2) how you said it. how did you say? (.) national fracture slit  
 58 (sighs) and which touches the ethnic side (.) which is very sensitive especially in  
 59 these areas it remained it remained (.) and it is ↑perpetuated now I think for  
 60 political motives. and for interests to manipulate in all ways but it exists, it exists  
 61 Corina: it seems to me  
 62 Ana: [we grew up in it  
 63 Corina: that here in this area where exercises of superiority are attempted, to be  
 64 made. it is exasperating sometimes ones sometimes the others. it depends who the  
 65 victim is and er (.) ignorance is: how to say it is at hand (.) so the history of the  
 66 Oradea is not known. it is not known who the architects were who built the  
 67 palaces on the main street (.) er and newly they are irritated if they have  
 68 Hungarian names. yes? I think that this is a part of the history that has to be  
 69 assumed it must be known for once and for all who build why they built (.) it is a  
 70 building, an edifice that will stay there BUT it has its right for its own history [...]  
 71 Ana: yes, I know what ↑you are talking about, but I am telling you what ↑others are saying.  
 72 So ↑others try to adjudge these values er (.) that are in a way already TRANSnational, and  
 73 which are related to a history. but they try to rebuild a neoimperialist map through culture.  
 74 namely, @we always dominated you through culture@. a kind of er intertextual message

In line 22 Ana (Romanian woman in her 50s) takes her turn. She starts out with the words “for me”. This and what follow shows that she has an alternative agenda for the discussion. The talk about Hungarian language in Oradea gives her a good platform to engage in two meta-narratives. First, she engages into a meta-story in a dialogue, not initiated by the interviewer, recounting the story of feelings of superiority and inferiority and inoculation against Hungarians and Hungarian language (lines 22–35). The second meta-story is that of cultural neo-imperialism (lines 71–74), which she gives as an answer on the loss of identity and the history of the built heritage. Both of these stories have long trajectories outside the surface context of the interview and they can be interpreted only by taking into account the historical and social contexts. These stories contain numerous references to issues that are not explained to the interviewer, since it appears that a common understanding for the needs of the interview situation can be reached without such explanations, which are more typical in the Finnish data.

The informants are well aware of and engage in complex discourses on Hungarian in Oradea. This is exemplified by the second meta-story about the use of names in the city and the topic of cultural neo-imperialism. Corina (Romanian woman in her 40s) relates how the history of Oradea is not known, and how a “newly they are irritated” (line 67) if the architectural structures have Hungarian names. She distances herself from this group, the dominant Romanian elite and states that history should be accepted.

The last section of the excerpt (lines 71–74) is particularly interesting because of Ana's use of the pronoun “they”, which changes its reference multiple times: Ana first agrees with Corina and uses marked intonation and stresses in order to make her words more emphatic. The referent of “others” changes. The first “others” are Romanians who blame Hungary for engaging in a neo-imperialist

cultural restoration. The second “others” in this reply, however, refer to the Hungarians who want to see the built heritage as their own. Ana argues in favor of transnational values, and by doing so she opposes such tendencies. The next “they” are the Hungarians who try “to rebuild a neo-imperialist map through culture” and there is “a kind of intertextual message”. By evoking such discourses she voices typical Romanian resentment and the fears caused by these cultural attempts at reclamation. She seems to elaborate, and makes more concrete, the theme introduced by her in lines 29–35. In the quoted excerpts we see how the trajectories of historical discourses from the 19th-century Hungarian Kingdom are intertwined with the trajectories of local discourses concerning the preservation and naming of the built heritage of the city of Oradea in the second decade of the 21st century.

In the next example, Olli, (see also section 6.2 and excerpt 3) reflects upon the historical background of Swedish in Finland:

### Excerpt 10

- 1 AK: so the general public usually doesn't make this gesture (.) doesn't
- 2 make the gesture towards er the Swedish speaking Finns or it's not (.) common?
- 3 Olli: no I don't think so (.) and perhaps you are right that (.) it's not very popular
- 4 to read Swedish (.) or to use Swedish this (.) for Finns (.) but I have some=some
- 5 (.) I have an intuition (.) or impression that (.) it's becoming perhaps not so
- 6 popular
- 7 Interviewer: ahm
- 8 Olli: the need of understanding Swedish (.) and we know that=that the history
- 9 (sighs) is long together with Swedish
- 10 Interviewer: mhm
- 11 Olli: to=to be in the same monarchy a:nd we know that the most important poems
- 12 is written in Swedish.
- 13 Interviewer: yeah
- 14 Olli: they were Finns but the most important literature was written in Swedish
- 15 Interviewer: I see
- 16 Olli: so it's quite important for Finns that we understand what our (.) Finnish (.)
- 17 Swedish speaking Finns wrote
- 18 Interviewer: ya
- 19 Olli: of course there are translations (.) but that's another thing
- 20 Interviewer: hmm
- 21 Olli: it's not the same that you read what Runeberg or Lönnrot or other Finns wrote

Based on previous interviews, the interviewer asks the informant whether or not he considers it common that Finns make a gesture toward Swedish speakers of learning the language. The interviewer already positions himself as someone who knows about the situation of Swedish in Finland. He constructs the idea that language study is a gesture toward the “Swedish-speaking Finns” (line 2). Olli then takes up this phrase and uses it throughout the entire interview.

In a matter of fact statement, the informant refers to the joint history of Sweden and Finland by evoking the common monarchy. As opposed to other interviewees this gives him a reason to be interested in the language. Recalling the joint history does not seem to convey negative undertones to him. Also, later in the interview he says: “we were the same monarchy we were one country” (Olli). Moreover, it seems to be an important aspect, or an added value, for him to learn the language. The informant here begins to build an ideology that the Swedish language belongs to Finland. Olli points out that there are similarities

between the two countries and the two cultures. The “history is long together with Swedish” (lines 8, 9). History is evoked in a generally positive light. Next, he refers to the long joint-history of Finnish and Swedish speakers in the Swedish monarchy, and the lasting influence of literature in Swedish. He says that it is important that Finns should know the language in which significant pieces of Finnish literature was written. He gives Runeberg and Lönnrot as examples, and argues that Finns should know Swedish so that they can read their works in the original and not only in translation.

Finally, we can recall how the informant talks about the 19th-century intellectual heritage of Swedish in present-day Finland, and that many outstanding Finnish intellectuals were speakers of Swedish. For example, Olli, in other parts of the interview not presented here, mentions Sibelius, and speaks of other prominent Swedish speakers, like Runeberg and Lönnrot, who had played a major role in the development of Finnish literature. The discourse is typical of an intellectual. In the Romanian context there are no similar Hungarian literary figures who would be accepted by Romanians.

## 7 Conclusions

The main objective of this analysis was to illustrate the diversity of discourses related to the learning of historical minority languages that circulate among the language learners. In the interviews, historical “metanarratives” and references to contemporary social/cultural contexts were frequent. This was fairly expected, since, for example, in the context of learning German in Poland (Mar-Molinero & Stevenson 2006) or South Tyrol (Cavagnoli & Nardin 1999), similar discourses are ubiquitous.

Applying the qualitative interview format, I asked informants about their voluntary learning of the major historical minority language in Romania and Finland. Finding language ideologies in these interviews with learners of historical minority languages was easy. The language ideologies were clearly co-constructed in the interviews and the answers by the interviewees were clearly geared to my question interactionally, and in regards to my position as a researcher as well. In the interviews with Finnish interviewees, it was often made explicit that I was a foreigner in Finland, and certain things that would not be explained to other Finns were explained to me. In the Romanian context I was treated as a local and cultural references were often left open to interpretation (on my role as a teacher of Hungarian, see Kiss 2013). The voluntary adult learners not only voiced general stereotypes like children in other studies (Martínez-Roldán & Malavé 2004), but as adults they also reflected on them in detail and contested many of the widespread beliefs and ideas over the minority language and learning it in the majority communities. The adult learners provide a good example of what is required in regards to a language ideological reorientation—a possible change during the lifetime (Woolard 2013; Pujolar & Gonzales 2013)—to replace the common concept of minority languages as “parochial and destabilizing” (May 2012: 84) to a minority language as a resource ideology. As a conclusion, from a political perspective, there is a need to replace the one state one language idea, with the ideology of mutual linguistic accommodation toward cohabitating a state or a region. Following May, I find that “the retention of a minority language and culture is an enduring need *for the majority as well*” (2012: 186, emphasis in original).

My main analytical goal was to compile the research results into themes and provide a discourse analysis of the themes that occur in both data sets in order to examine the similarities and differences of the two contexts. Learning Swedish at school is unanimously given as the basic reason for voluntarily learning Swedish. In comparison, Romanians had not previously attended language classes. However, family ties, geographical proximity, and economical interest as well as contact with the neighboring country were mentioned as reasons for learning Hungarian. Besides the mention of access to material goods (e.g. communication in tourism, shopping), both Hungarian and Swedish are seen as languages that are important tools to access spiritual and cultural goods like education, knowledge of fine arts, and poetry.

Despite the very different backgrounds, historical discourses of *the other* bear resemblances in both countries. The grievance narratives have been handed down through generations and they obstruct openness towards the learning of the historical minority language. To some extent, both Swedish and Hungarian are still perceived by many interviewees as the language of the former elites. It is notable that even though Swedish learning is supported by the Finnish language policy, the stereotypes about the language still linger.

In Finland, intellectuals express a cultural interest in Swedish language as the historic heritage and see it as part of Finland. In many interviews, the joint history offers a basis for a better understanding of other Scandinavian countries and of the history of the Finns. In relation to meta-narratives about history, different approaches surface in the two data sets. In the Finnish data the learners who studied Swedish voluntarily expressed acceptance of the historical past and Swedish language as a part of Finnish history. That is, there are signs of mutual accommodation of Finnish and Swedish history, culture, and language in Finland. Perhaps this is a consequence of Finland not being a part of “the exclusive club of ‘true’ ethno-linguistic nation states” (Kamusella 2009: 57). In a clear contrast to the Finnish signs of mutual accommodation, we saw how Romanians learning Hungarian still struggle with the fact that common elements of history are neglected, or are outright rejected by both parties. One explaining factor can be that Finland was under Swedish rule as late as 1809, whereas Transylvania belonged to Hungary until 1920 and still in 1941-1944. That is, in Finland the 19th century Finnish linguistic nationalism was not a threat to the national unity of Sweden, and thus the Swedish speaking intelligentsia in Finland supported it to a certain extent. In contrast, the national movements of the Romanians in 19th century Transylvania were relegated to rebellious groups in the eyes of the emerging Hungarian nation state. The brief interlude of Hungarian rule in northern Transylvania during 1941-1944 is still referred to as “returning to home” (*‘visszatéres’* in Hungarian) from the Hungarian point of view, whereas Romanian official and popular narratives refer to that period as “Hungarian occupation”.

The study in the two contexts shows that historical metanarratives about the joint historical past can hinder, or outright block, language learning of the respective minority languages, as we can witness in other contexts as well. The contemporary socio-cultural context, partly due to globalization and the spread of post-national ideologies (Heller 2011), is in both cases favorable toward the learning of the historical minority language. At first sight, it appears more favorable in the case of Finland, since learning Swedish is a part of the compulsory education for the majority. However, there is a paradox, for this both motivates and hinders the adults from learning the minority language. For

those few capable of a language ideological reorientation free from the stereotype of *pakkoruotsi* ('compulsory learning of Swedish'), the previous experience at school motivates them to refresh their Swedish knowledge later on: "I didn't want to start a new language" as one of my interviewees put it. In general, the learning of historical languages can build on the contemporary socio-cultural context in Europe. At the same time, it is much harder to contest and change the historical metanarratives (e.g. that Hungarians "occupied" Oradea between 1941–1944, or that Swedish speakers form the "upper class" in Finland). For the future, where the learning of one another's language would also become standard for the majority, a general language ideological reorientation of these historical metanarratives is necessary. That is, by learning and acknowledging the other's perspective to history and linguistics belonging we can focus on shared history and multilingual practices instead of nation state antagonisms and monolingual preferences. Future research is needed to indicate general and context-bound ways to achieve such an ideological reorientation, which supports the voluntary learning of historical minority languages by the majority on a European scale.

## Acknowledgements

I am grateful for the University of Jyväskylä, CIMO, and Svenska Kulturfonden for grants that have enabled me to carry out the research reported here. I would like to thank Petteri Laihonen, Åsa Palviainen, Sabine Ylönen and the two anonymous reviewers for helpful comments on earlier versions of this article. Any remaining shortcomings are solely my responsibility.

## Endnote

<sup>1</sup> The definition of the "third age" essentially refers to older adults (aged more or less in the 50–75 age band) "whose everyday lives are no longer tied to the responsibilities of regular employment and/or raising a family" (Weiss & Bass 2001: 3).

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## Appendix: Transcription symbols

=	latched to the previous talk
(0.4)	measured pause
(.)	micro-pause less than 0.2 seconds
@	change of voice
well-	cut off of the preceding sound
?	question intonation
,	continuing intonation
.	falling intonation
↑	rising intonation
[]	overlapping talk
*word*	an utterance in another language than the rest of the interview
(---)	unclear
CAPITALS	stressed volume

Received February 20, 2014  
Revision received October 28, 2014  
Accepted June 17, 2015